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DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EAP/RSP/TC, EAP/PA, EAP/PD -
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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S. ARMS SALES TO TAIWAN

1. Summary: Major Taipei dailies continued August 25 to cover the aftermath of a riot by Thai laborers in Kaohsiung, and also provided substantial reporting on the issue of U.S. arms sales to Taiwan. The pro-independence "Liberty Times," "Taiwan Daily" and the centrist "China Time" all carried U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's remarks on Taiwan's arms

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procurements at a Pentagon pres briefing Tuesday. The two pro-independence newspapers emphasized, in particular, Rumsfeld's statement in which he referred to Taiwan as a "sovereign nation." The "Liberty Times" carried the news story on its page three, and topped it with the headline: "Rumsfeld: Taiwan is a sovereign nation"; "Taiwan Daily" ran a banner headline on its second page that read: "Rumsfeld [talking about Taiwan's arms procurements]: It is up to the sovereign nation to decide." All Chinese-language Taipei dailies also carried the news story regarding a decision by Taiwan's Executive Yuan's to withdraw its original special budget for the U.S. arms procurement bill, and to include the purchase of PAC-3 missiles in the regular annual budget. In addition, both the "Liberty Times" and "China Times" reported in their inside pages that the United States is likely to commission a Spanish shipbuilder to manufacture the submarines for Taiwan.

2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, a "Liberty Times" editorial called on new KMT Chairman Ma Ying-jeou to meet with President Chen Shui-bian and discuss the U.S. arms procurement bill. A "Taiwan Daily" editorial also urged the Pan-Blue legislators to respect the rules of procedure in the Congress and to not block the passage of the arms procurement bill any more. End summary.

A) "Bian-Ma Meeting to Unlock the [Controversial U.S.] Arms Procurements Is a Common Expectation of All the Taiwan People"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 600,000] editorialized (8/25):

". Taiwan is naturally the main target of China's rise, and China will definitely walk on the road of becoming a hegemonic power, which will pose a threat to the free world. The United States and Japan have thus been on the alert against it. In other words, the Pan-Blue camp's boycotts against the U.S. arms procurements will not only endanger Taiwan's own security but will also create a potential crisis [with regard to] the peace and stability of the world. This is why the United States has been gravely concerned about the arms deal [with Taiwan]. On the one hand, Taiwan needs to demonstrate its determination to defend itself; it must not rely solely on the United States and put its survival on the moral support of an ally. On the other hand, Washington is concerned that once there is an opening in the defenses of the [united] front formed by the free world, it will lead to non-peaceful rising of a Chinese hegemony that will ravage the free world. As a result, in consideration of a harmonious political situation, national security and world peace, this newspaper hopes Chairman Ma Ying-jeou would change his mind and accept President Chen's invitation to engage in a candid and reasonable meeting and exchange of views on major issues such as the U.S. arms procurement bill. ."

B) "Legislative Yuan's Procedure Committee Has Blocked the [U.S.] Arms Procurement Bill for 26 Consecutive Times; This Is an Outrageously Bizarre Move"

". We believe that the Legislative Yuan's Procedure Committee, dominated by primarily by the Pan-Blue force, will not easily change its decision [with regard to the U.S. arms procurement bill] simply because new

KMT Chairman Ma Ying-jeou's personal attitude. These Pan-Blue legislators have grown used to a conditioned response when they were under the helms of Lien Chan and James Soong earlier; namely, they tend to `oppose whatever [Chen Shui-bian] said' and `resist whatever Taiwan needs'. The Pan-Blue legislators should figure out how to act in their capacity and start respecting and abiding the rules of procedure in the Congress, or their voters will not possibly tolerate their reckless or contradictory acts that disregard `political ethnics,' `public interests, and `political responsibility.'"

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